

Simply Delicious!

I took a few minutes this morning to think about this weekend and what a wonderful July 4th we were blessed with. We got a touch of everything we'd hoped for...visiting with family, great food and wine, a little boating and fishing, a wonderful service at church and weather that bordered on perfect. Hey and don't forget the fireworks; they were outstanding.

Then I got in on Tuesday morning.

In the course of my morning routine I check emails and one of them from a dear friend in Florida reminded me of who picked up the tab for this great national celebration. Thank the men and women of our armed forces and if you pray, offer up one for them every day.

Every one of us should thank our lucky stars we live in the United States. If you don't agree, you need to visit your other options and then decide.

We came across a really nifty new chicken recipe this weekend courtesy of my Bostonian sister-in-law, Bobbi. It's a recipe that seems like it's too simple but one taste and you know that simple can be delicious. Giving credit where credit is due, Bobbi explains that this recipe came to her from two nurse friends, Mary Folan and Linda Leone, at Quincy Medical Center in Quincy, Mass.

Finger Lickin' Chicken

(serves 6 to 8)

3 ½ to 4 lbs. chicken (wings, thighs, legs, breasts, etc.)
1 large bottle prepared Italian dressing (not balsamic based)
1 1/3 cups light brown sugar

Preheat oven to 300°F and set oven rack to middle of the oven. Wash chicken pieces, pat them dry with a paper towel and arrange them evenly in a large roaster pan or casserole dish. Shake up your Italian dressing and pour over the chicken pieces. Using your hands, crumble the brown sugar evenly over all of the chicken pieces.

Place chicken in the preheated oven and bake, uncovered, for 2 to 2 ½ hours. At two hours check the chicken for doneness by inserting a thin knife or skewer into the meaty part of a large piece. If the juices run clear your bird is done, otherwise return to oven for approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Your time will vary according to the oven and the size of the pieces of chicken you are cooking.



We all loved this dish and it was particularly well received by the children. The chicken comes out “fall off the bone” tender and juicy with a lovely golden brown color in the skin. This is an easy, no fuss recipe well suited for the summer!

If you have a garden you will have noticed that things are starting to happen and that yellow squash is coming in and we’ll soon be enjoying some of the amazing sweet corn from our region. Here’s a superb mixed casserole that is the perfect way to enjoy fresh produce of your own or from your local farmer’s vegetable stand.

Summer Garden Casserole

(serves 8)

2 lbs. yellow squash, sliced
1 medium sweet onion, chopped
6 ears sweet corn, blanched
2 teaspoons olive oil
1 teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
1 ½ lbs. shredded cheddar cheese
½ cup sour cream
2 cups corn flakes, coarsely crushed
½ cup butter, melted

Preheat oven to 350°F.

Sauté squash and onion in a sauté pan with olive oil until squash is soft and onion is beginning to brown. Add salt and pepper and place in a large casserole dish. Mix in sour cream, cheese, blanched sweet corn that has been sliced off of the ears and 1 cup of your crushed corn flakes. Sprinkle the remainder of your corn flakes over top of the casserole and then drizzle the melted butter evenly over the top.

Bake until top is golden brown, about 30 to 40 minutes. Remove from oven and allow to cool 10 minutes before serving.

Some general rules of thumb if you enjoy red wines during the summer is to find red wines that are produced in areas that get particularly warm during summer season. This is more a factor in how the winemaker crafts the wines to be attractive in his climate than how it relates to the way grapes grow in that specific area. In general, red wines for summer need to be fruit forward in styling and be a touch lighter in body to make them easily enjoyed when the mercury inches up into the 90’s.

In southern France, specific grapes such as Grenache and Carignan provide a host of enjoyable summer wines. Also, Gamay in the region of Beaujolais’ has long been associated with lighter styled red wines that compliment poultry or grilled meats.

Gerard Bertrand produces a very nice 2000 Carignan from the region of Languedoc-Roussillon that offers supple dark fruit flavors with a softer structure in the wine's tannins than might be expected in a wine of this color and intensity. Also, we gave very high marks to the Louis Latour 2002 Beaujolais' Village, which offers a terrific example of the best qualities to be found in the Gamay grape. The winemakers for Latour are particularly well versed in getting the very best wines from the fruit they are working with and this BV is packed with bright, snappy fruit character that is both fun and complex. This is a red that would be excellent for enjoying by itself in the evening watching fireflies...if you know what I mean.

Italian reds have always been great finds for summer and one we have fallen in love with is the Farnese 2003 Montepulciano d'Abruzzo. We have sold a ton of this wine in California to clients who know good reds and are fairly picky in what they buy. It offers a fruit base of black currants and cherries with a soft tannin finish that borders on spicy. I've poured this wine with a wide variety of foods including salmon, pasta, burgers, ribs and grilled lamb and it has never failed to impress.

If we can be of assistance always feel free to call us at 888-288-0668 or visit us on the web at www.winedog.com. Cheers!

P.S. We'd like to offer our congratulations to Eastern Sky, a bluegrass gospel group we have enjoyed in Clinton County. They placed 3rd out of 40 entries in a national bluegrass gospel music competition in Nashville this past week! Keep on pickin', gang!